I knew it was going to be a dramatic season. The fall of 2015 cast me not only as volleyball coach, but also as teacher and graduate student. Meanwhile, my wife and I are expecting our first child, a baby boy, in November. I prepared my mind, my heart, and my soul, glad for worthy tasks that let me do what I love. The warrior’s approach is to say yes to life: yea to it all.

It was my second season as coach, and I couldn’t wait. I love volleyball and I love my players, and I was eager to continue the good work we began last year. My players were excited, too.

**--INTERVIEWS WITH PLAYERS--**

Cue the conflict: two days before the season began, I was diagnosed with seminoma, a form of testicular cancer. I had surgery the next day, and spent the week recovering with my family. Back in Skagway, the team began practices without me. Colleagues and friends supervised, but it was my players who really took the initiative.

**--FOOTAGE OF PLAYERS PRACTICING WITHOUT ME--**

I returned to practice the next week, but it would take me weeks to recover. I led and encouraged as best I could, but I did most of my coaching from a stool at the scorer’s table.

**--FOOTAGE OF ME COACHING FROM THE STOOL--**

Then, in my time of weakness, a wonderful thing happened. My players got stronger. They began to lead their own warm-ups. They encouraged each other. Everything they did, they did with a new sense of purpose and intensity. They took ownership of their team.

**--FOOTAGE OF PLAYERS PRACTICING AND GETTING BETTER--**

As for me, I learned to trust my players more than I had before. Good leaders raise up other leaders, and I set myself to this task. Our season brought with it more challenges, but together we had become stronger. The players played for each other. We all played for each other.

**--FOOTAGE OF GAMES, AND OF ME ABLE TO PRACTICE WITH PLAYERS--**

Late in the season, when it was time to leave with my wife to go to Juneau to have our baby, the team faced the Regional Tournament without me. The thing is, even though I wasn’t with them, they were never without me. They play with the same love for the game and for each other, and that love resonates over distance as it does over pain and weakness.